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SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHANNON MEETS WITH CHILEAN
MINISTER OF DEFENSE

REF: A. STATE 46501

[1](#)B. SANTIAGO 00639

[1](#)C. SANTIAGO 00546 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Craig Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: WHA Assistant Secretary Shannon and Chilean Minister of Defense Jose Goni exchanged views on regional issues and the U.S.-Chile bilateral military relationship during their April 24 meeting. Goni told A/S Shannon he valued the close relationship between the U.S. and Chilean militaries. Regionally, military to military cooperation was improving, with the Chile - Argentina joint peacekeeping force on track, as well as confidence-building measures with Peru and Ecuador. Chile is watching closely Venezuela's military initiatives in the region, particularly in Bolivia, but these "are not a matter of concern at this point." Goni stressed the GOC's commitment to Haiti and predicted the Chilean Senate would likely extend Chile's participation in MINUSTAH for another year when it comes up for a vote in May.

The Senate recently approved the GOC request to extend the 27-person commitment to EUFOR (Bosnia). The GOC will soon introduce a bill to Congress to regularize future Chilean contributions to peace-keeping operations. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) A/S Shannon called on Defense Minister Jose Goni April 24 during his April 24-26 visit to Chile. A/S Shannon was accompanied by Ambassador, DATT, and Poloffs. MOD Goni was accompanied by Under-Secretary for War Gonzalo Garcia, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff General Marcos Lopez, Air Force Aide de Camp Col. Aldo Carboni, and MOD civilian advisor Maria Inez Ruz.

A CLOSE AND GROWING RELATIONSHIP

[1](#)3. (C) A/S Shannon characterized the U.S.-Chile bilateral relationship as very good. Pol-mil talks in Washington in March had been a valuable exercise; Under Secretary Burns had been impressed with the level of Chilean representation and Chile's strategic vision (reftel A). The U.S. is looking for ways to deepen and broaden the relationship at a time when our countries are converging on a range of strategic and security concerns. Goni agreed the overall relationship, not only commercially but also politically and militarily, was very good. The U.S. and Chile have a shared vision about

regional security concerns and need to reinforce institutions in Haiti, although "for you (the U.S.) the security situation is very complex." Bilateral military relations are being reinforced and the interaction remains key for Chile's internal military restructuring. He noted this cooperation had increased Chilean capacity for cooperation with other regional militaries. SOUTHCOM Commander Stavridis' May visit, the Defense Consultative Commission meeting scheduled in Washington for June, and other possible senior-level visits illustrate the importance of the relationship.

NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS

14. (C) Goni said relations with Argentina were on track and improving. Building on past confidence-building measures like sharing comparative data on defense spending, Chile and Argentina were well advanced in standing up a joint peacekeeping battalion. The experience in Haiti and other peacekeeping operations (PKOs) had helped this effort. Peru is pushing hard to enter into a similar arrangement with Chile, as is Ecuador. However, the Argentina experience had demonstrated that such arrangements had to be constructed one step at a time. Given the state of mil-mil cooperation with Peru, and Chile's limited resources, it would be some time before Chile could consider other regional PKO alliances. A/S Shannon noted that Chile's capabilities and professionalism were widely recognized, as shown by the desire of others in the region to join forces with Chile. He added that given Chile's capabilities and successful PKO record, he would not be surprised to see UNSYG Ban Ki-moon knocking on Chile's door soon to ask for more participation in global PKO efforts. He urged Chile to consider such requests positively.

15. (C) Goni said Chile was also improving relations with Peru, trying to transplant the same models of military transparency and professional exchanges that had worked with Argentina. Other examples were ceremonies by both countries' militaries to recognize the other side's heroes of the 1897 War of the Pacific, and participation in each other's military and national celebrations. The two countries' militaries are leading efforts to break down deep-seated prejudices through symbolic exchanges.

16. (C) Although Chile is watching Venezuelan support to Bolivia's military closely, it is not yet a "cause for concern." Goni said it would take some time to see the results of the political restructuring in Bolivia, but that Chile hoped to be able to improve the bilateral relationship.

REGIONAL PLAYERS

17. (C) Goni brushed over Chile's relationship with Brazil, saying he was sure A/S Shannon had gotten a read on regional actors in his earlier meeting with FM Foxley (septel). Noting he had recently left his posting as Ambassador to Mexico, Goni said Mexico under Fox had greatly diminished its presence as a regional actor. This was unfortunate, but would likely be reversed under Calderon. Now that the question of Mexico's domestic direction had been resolved, Calderon would be paying greater attention to regional issues. Chile is willing to assist Mexico in its efforts at regional reinsertion, and believes Mexico could play a greater and productive role.

18. (C) Goni asked A/S Shannon for his views on the region. A/S Shannon characterized the situation as "effervescent." Venezuela's decision to switch its focus south, withdrawing from CAN and joining MERCOSUR, coupled with its vast resources and more aggressive philosophy, are generating friction and policy conflicts in the region. Political developments in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador present challenges to democratic governance. U.S. policy is to promote a positive agenda, offer space for regional dialogue and cooperation, and look for opportunities to secure

important advances in economic and social developments. With Chile, the U.S. is looking to developing links between Latin America and Asia as an engine for growth and political stability. Goni noted that there was a clear effort by Chavez and "his cronies" to influence other countries. Reiterating it was "not a cause for concern," Goni said that Chile was watching closely Venezuela's military relations with Brazil, particularly military sales. Military to military relations seem to be a major thrust in the evolution of Venezuela foreign policy.

HAITI

¶9. (C) Goni said discussions about extending Chile's commitment in Haiti were going well. The GOC already had requested Senate approval for an extension beyond May 2007 (reftel B). Some senators are taking hard-line positions, critical of costs and the apparently open-ended commitment there. However, a Senate delegation visit to Haiti in March had a positive impact on the debate, as did the GOC initiative to begin discussions two months before the decision deadline (as opposed to last year, when the GOC requested an extension the week before authorization expired). Goni predicted the Senate would authorize a one-year extension of Chile's Haiti mission in May, noting the Senate had recently extended the mandate of Chile's detachment in Bosnia. The GOC would introducing legislation to Congress in the next two weeks to regulate future Chilean PKO deployments (reftel C).

¶10. (C) The international community has a responsibility to establish a credible and professional police force in Haiti, Goni declared. The key challenge facing all institutions and development efforts in Haiti is crime and public security. Chile is currently training 15 Haitian National Police officers at its police academy in a "tailor-made" course.

The officers are performing very well. These HNP officers would be reincorporated as trainers on return to Haiti, helping change the institutional culture.

¶11. (U) Assistant Secretary Shannon cleared this cable.
KELLY